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THE HONGKONG DISPENSARY.

Established A.D. 1841.

Hongkong, 27th July, 1904.

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The Daily Press.

HONGKONG, AUGUST 23, 1904.

In view of the agreement recently come to after very lengthened negotiations between Great Britain and China on the Sikkim-Thibet question, some remarks by Captain Bown in his book "Across Thibet," are interesting as throwing a little light on the relations between the Chinese Government and the Lamas.

The gallant explorer, when he reached "Chiamdo," a town in Eastern Thibet, was met by the Chinese Amban and a number of the Lamas. He describes the Amban as an extremely glib looking young man, his voice, appearance, and manners being truly feminine, and his gait mincing, while the Lamas were strikingly able and intellectual looking men, the two head chiefs having faces that would attract attention anywhere. The Lamas strongly opposed Captain Bown's further advance, and threatened to stop him forcibly if he attempted to proceed. The Amban, in a private interview, professed the greatest friendliness, but said the Lamas were a turbulent set and he had really no power at all. In a subsequent interview this official had to play the peacemaker, the Lamas taking a very high tone towards the British explorer, who was not disposed to cave in to them, but ultimately agreed to halt. Captain Bown goes on to remark: "The position of the Chinese in these parts seems very peculiar. What the status of the Amban is it is impossible to make out; he is treated with great respect so far as we saw, but possibly a good deal of the hiving and scraping that went on was for his benefit in order that the Lamas, while twisting and turning him, might keep up the force that they were in every way subservient to the representative of a great power." Chiamdo is a flourishing town of some 12,000, of whom Captain Bown estimates three thousand are monks. He says the Chinese have got a pretty good foothold in the town, as was evidenced by the enormous numbers of them he saw when riding past the place. They do most of the business, and are, as in other countries, gradually acquiring power, but so far they do not venture to attempt to exercise any authority; it was not until Captain Bown's residence at Bathang, near the Chinese frontier, that he found the Chinese officials took upon themselves to assume administrative functions. At Bathang the explorer went to the Chinese town, and was followed by a crowd to his quarters, but Chinese hordes, armed with bamboo, cleared the courtyard of the building to which the party were conducted. Yet even at Bathang, as Captain Bown recalls, the French Mission Station was wrecked and pillaged by a mob in 1897, and though the Tsung-li Yamen promised compensation and redress the missionaries, now at Chien-lin, are still in communication with the authorities in the hope of returning to the place. Whether the Chinese are really afraid of the temper of the populace, or only use the plea of local turbulence as a

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The friends of Captain Galloway and Mr. Bown, who were in the Japanese steamer *Yokohama*, were relieved to learn that the steamer was safe, and had really no power at all. In a subsequent interview this official had to play the peacemaker, the Lamas taking a very high tone towards the British explorer, who was not disposed to cave in to them, but ultimately agreed to halt. Captain Bown goes on to remark: "The position of the Chinese in these parts seems very peculiar. What the status of the Amban is it is impossible to make out; he is treated with great respect so far as we saw, but possibly a good deal of the hiving and scraping that went on was for his benefit in order that the Lamas, while twisting and turning him, might keep up the force that they were in every way subservient to the representative of a great power." Chiamdo is a flourishing town of some 12,000, of whom Captain Bown estimates three thousand are monks. He says the Chinese have got a pretty good foothold in the town, as was evidenced by the enormous numbers of them he saw when riding past the place. They do most of the business, and are, as in other countries, gradually acquiring power, but so far they do not venture to attempt to exercise any authority; it was not until Captain Bown's residence at Bathang, near the Chinese frontier, that he found the Chinese officials took upon themselves to assume administrative functions. At Bathang the explorer went to the Chinese town, and was followed by a crowd to his quarters, but Chinese hordes, armed with bamboo, cleared the courtyard of the building to which the party were conducted. Yet even at Bathang, as Captain Bown recalls, the French Mission Station was wrecked and pillaged by a mob in 1897, and though the Tsung-li Yamen promised compensation and redress the missionaries, now at Chien-lin, are still in communication with the authorities in the hope of returning to the place. Whether the Chinese are really afraid of the temper of the populace, or only use the plea of local turbulence as a

booby to exorcise the missionaries is matter for speculation.

The Thibetan is by no means a faithful character. He is a true dissembler of his own and can in this respect hold his own with any of the Chinese. They are also accomplished pilferers, and Captain Bown strongly suspected the monks of being addicted to this habit. Things were often stolen in the most dexterous fashion, right from under the eyes of the party. It is also, he discovered, impossible to put the slightest trust in the assurances of a Thibetan, who has no scruples in deceiving even his employer. The people are also truly superstitious and very immoral. Low, however, as the Thibetans are generally in the scale of social honour, they are worse in the domain under Chinese influence. Captain Bown noticed a great change in the attitude of the people directly he entered the country, under the jurisdiction of the Dava Zhing, the identical people from the rule of China differ enormously from those under Lamas.

The Chinese Government, he adds, "may not be a strong one, but, compared to the Chinese, it seems so, because, instead of being the rule, and the exception, and the people can certainly be restrained and kept in order by those in authority over them. A good deal of it may be owing to the fact that the Thibetan of high rank is more measurably superior to the Chinese man, in intellect his equal, in strength, in character his superior; there is a more manly, healthy tone about him than about the time-serving flatterer of the Celestial Empire." The Lamas rule the people with a rod of iron, by working on their superstitious fears.

Captain Bown confirms the statements of some other travellers that there is a strongly developed taste for trading among all classes in Thibet, and they are ever ready to seize any opportunity to do a little barter. The higher officials more particularly devote themselves to commerce, both because their conditions are small and their position gives them ample opportunities to trade with advantage. The Lamas, he says, utilize portions of the great wealth their monasteries contain for trading purposes, the proceeds being applied to devote a certain amount of attention to commerce, and the monks are eager to dispose of wool and hides. "Formerly the trade with Chien-lin was entirely in the hands of the Thibetans," but the Thibetans have "shown their commercial capabilities by almost completely ousting the Celestials, and now go there themselves to make purchases." Captain Bown thinks, that with regard to the prospects of trade with India, this is the article which would rank first as an import, and if no restrictions are placed in the way Thibet would furnish a fine market for the Indian product if the coarse kinds were converted into brick tea. Sugar, tobacco, rice, knives, crockery, tinware, and other goods, and brightly stamped cotton cloth would also find a ready market. The principal product of Thibet is wool, but much is also plentiful and cheap, and there is evidently a great accumulation of the precious metals in the country. Captain Bown says that women dressed in dirty sheepskins often wear silver ornaments to the value of several hundred rupees, while a gold bead hangs in some of the rivers, and is cheap in some parts; the explorer mentions that at Lithang he found his relative value to silver was fourfold to one. The country is of course relatively poor, and it is thinly populated, the estimated number of inhabitants being not more than four millions. But they have valleys, which could be best supplied by India, at all events for the western portion of the country, and it may be hoped that under the new agreement this trade will have a fair chance of developing.

We heard that the Japanese had for some days past been engaged in the search in respect of a steamer wrecked on the coast of Korea, and that the Japanese had been successful in recovering the wreck.

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Pseudoceros *sp.*, 8 gams, 1,930 h.p.,
Capt. Borg, at Vladivostok
Pseudoceros *sp.*, 7 gams, 1,930 h.p.,
Capt. Elliott, at Vladivostok
Pseudoceros *sp.*, 6 gams, 1,733 h.p.,
Capt. Holstomansky, at Vladivostok
Pseudoceros *sp.*, 4 gams, Capt. Dancourt,
at Korea
Pseudoceros *sp.*, 4 gams, 450 h.p., Com.
Dancourt, at Bangkok
Pseudoceros *Russianensis*, 7 gams, 2,000 h.p.,
Com. Danonoff, at Hongkong
Pseudoceros *sp.*, 5 gams, 1,570 h.p., Com.
Angeles, at Yokohama
Pseudoceros *sp.*, 4 gams, 1,700 h.p., Com.
Laur, at Japan
Pseudoceros *sp.*, 4 gams, 1,700 h.p., Com.
Laur, at Japan
Pseudoceros *sp.*, 9 gams, 253 h.p.,
Capt. Laurin, at Yia Hapoot
Pseudoceros *sp.*, 4 gams, Capt. Pouchet, at
Yanai

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